

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3406

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 7411

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT-PRESS CONTROVERSY CONTINUES

REF: BA 7375

1. OVER WEEKEND, NEWSMEN INTERVIEWED INTERIOR MINISTER ANGEL ROBLEDO AND QUESTIONED HIM ON WIDELY CIRCULATED STORY THAT GOA PLANNING TO MOVE AGAINST CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS. ROBLEDO RESPONDED THAT AS OF THIS MOMENT HIS MINISTRY NOT MAKING ANY OFFICIAL MOVES TO CLOSE ANY NEWSPAPERS THOUGH HE LEFT CLEAR IMPLICATION THAT THIS COULD HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE IF CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANTED.

2. AT THE SAME TIME JUSTICE MINISTER CORVALAN NANCLARES TOLD AUDIENCE IN MENDOZA PROVINCE THAT PERONISTS HAD BEEN EXCEEDINGLY TOLERANT OF PRESS CRITICISM, BUT WARNED THAT THEIR PATIENCE WOULD NOT HOLD OUT FOREVER. HE FURTHER ADDED THAT UNDER SUBVERSION LAWS GOA HAD ALL POWERS TO MOVE LEGALLY AGAINST NEWSPAPERS THEY FELT WERE UNDERMINING PRESENT ADMINISTRATION.

3. THE JUSTICE MINISTRY IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN QUESTIONING THIS WEEK THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PLACING ADS IN LA NACION WHICH CALLED FOR FORMATION OF PRIVATE BRIGADES TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT AND ITS ANTITERRORIST EFFORTS. LA NACION HAS TO DATE REFUSED
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ANY PUBLIC COMMENT ON ISSUE BUT IS EXPECTED TO HAVE TO RESPOND

THIS WEEK TO JUSTICE MINISTER'S PROBE.

4. LA OPINION, PAPER FELT BY MOST TO BE MOST DIRECT OBJECT OF GOA'S WRATH, TOOK OPPOSITE TACTIC FROM LA NACION AND CAME OUT FIGHTING OVER THE WEEKEND. IN PROMINENT ARTICLE, POLITICAL COLUMNIST HERIBERTO KAHN RESPONDED TO DEATH THREAT PUBLISHED IN ULTRA RIGHT-WING EL CAUDILLO BY NOTING THAT MAGAZINE RECEIVED STRONG FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE PERONIST 62 ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER GROUPS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE ADMINISTRATION. KAHN NOTED THAT ARTICLE THREATENING HIM CLAIMS HE PARTICIPATED IN 1956 FIRING SQUADS WHICH EXECUTED SEVERAL PERONIST GENERALS. HE WAS 10 YEARS OLD AT THE TIME AND NOTES THAT HE DID NOT TAKE STAND ON ISSUE. HE FURTHER REFUTES CHARGES CLAIMING HE HAS BEEN PROMINENT IN ANTI-PERONIST LABOR ACTIVITIES SINCE 1955, STATING THAT HE NOT ONLY WAS WORLD'S FIRST JUVENILE LABOR LEADER BUT HAS NEVER PARTICIPATED IN LABOR ACTIVITIES. IN MOST IRONIC AND BITING PORTION OF HIS ARTICLE, KAHN, PARAPHRASING MRS. PERON, STATES HIS INTENTION TO "NOT RESIGN FROM THE EXERCISE OF HIS PROFESSION OR ASK FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR ARGENTINE PRESS FREEDOM."

5. IN ADDITION TO HIS ARTICLE, KAHN WENT TO CONGRESS ON NOVEMBER 7 AND DELIVERED STATEMENT TO UCR LEADER TROCCOLI WHICH SAYS THAT IF ANY HARM COMES TO HIM OR HIS FAMILY HE WILL HOLD THE PUBLISHER OF EL CAUDILLO AND ITS PERONIST SUPPORTERS LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE. KAHN ALSO WENT TO POLICE CHIEF PINTO AND SWORE OUT OFFICIAL COMPLAINT AGAINST EL CAUDILLO FOR ADVOCATING HIS ASSASSINATION.

6. LA OPINION FURTHER RESPONDED TO GOVERNMENT BY PUBLISHING FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL NOVEMBER 8 TITLED "THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CLOSE DOWN LA OPINION." THURST OF EDITORIAL WAS THAT BY CLOSING LA OPINION GOVERNMENT COULD BE ASSURED THAT INFLATION WOULD DIMINISH, LABOR STRIFE WOULD END, ASSASSINATIONS BY TERRORISTS ON BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT WOULD DISAPPEAR, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION WOULD CEASE.

7. COMMENT: LA OPINION EDITOR TOLD EMBOFF THAT PAPER HAS BEEN OPENLY AND SENSELESSLY ATTACKED BY GOVERNMENT AND THUS FEELS OBLIGED TO "GO TO WAR" TO DEFEND ITSELF. HE ADDED THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAPER WOULD PUBLISH FURTHER EXPOSES ABOUT CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES IN NEAR FUTURE. THIS CAN ONLY ADD FURTHER FUEL TO FIRE. POSSIBILITY THAT GOA WILL CLOSE PAPER INCREASING, ALTHOUGH THIS STEP WILL ADD TO ITS CURRENT POLITICAL WOES. HILL

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